2021 October

HONKY TALK

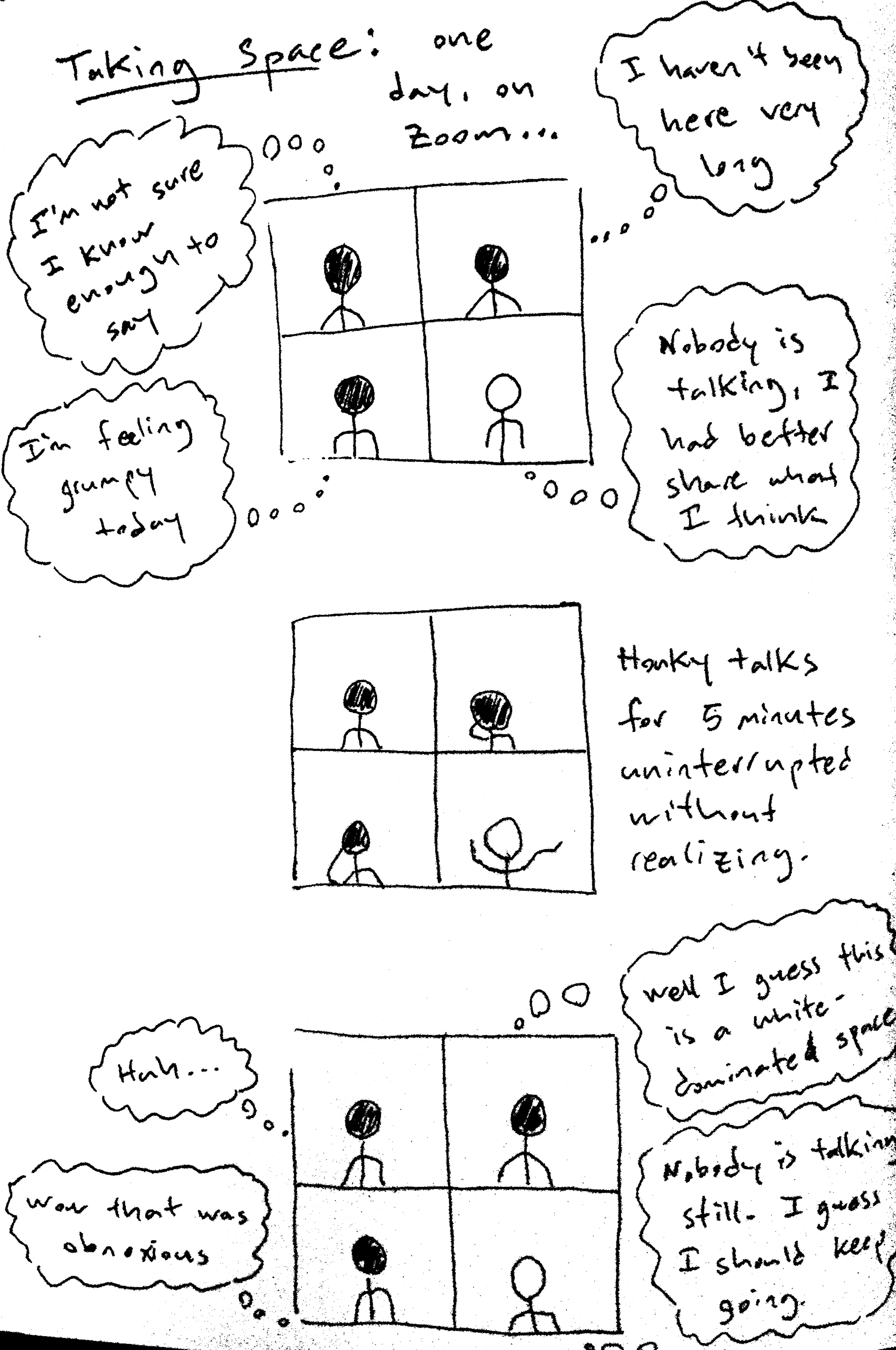
From Honky
To Honky

ISSUE #1

Meeting Etiquette

Do not have any doubt. This zine is for you. And not for your entertainment. It is for your education and reflection. Even as I write these comics, I see as much of myself in its antagonists as I see my comrades in them. It is easy to notice oppresive behavior in others, and much harder in ourselves. In reflecting on the scenarios presented herein you might consider asking a trusted and critical comrade ~ one who is not shy to disagree with you - if you ever take up too much space in meeting. You can tell them I sent you as a conversation starter.

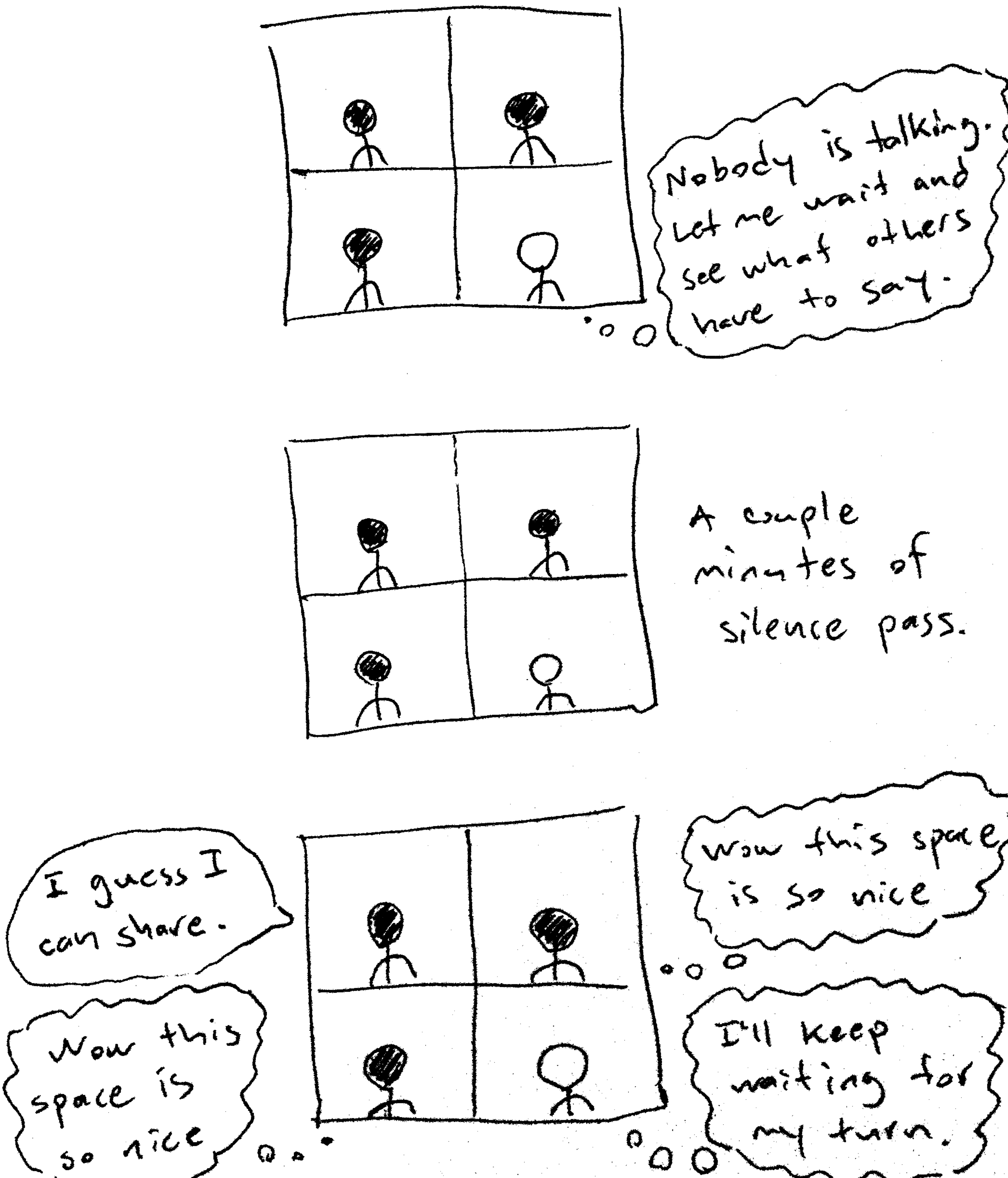
It must also be noted that while this zine focuses on race, and there are particular racializing harms that occur when white people take up space, analogous zines could be written on men specifically taking up space or on priveleged people of any shade and persuasion. If it helps you as a reader, you can imagine whiteness in the following comics as a stand-in for any relevant combination of attributes that grant power and privelege in a specific context. Ultimately there will always be some context where you enjoy certain privileges, and this zine is about you in that situation.


Taking Space: one day, on Zoom...
I'm not sure I know enough to say
I haven't been here very long
I'm feeling grumpy today
Nobody is talking, I had better share what I think
Honky talks for 5 minutes uninterrupted without realizing.
Huh...
well I guess this is a white-dominated space
Wow that was obnoxious
Nobody is talkin still. I guess I should keep going.

Analysis: Taking Space

The white participant, perhaps for a reason as simple as their discomfort with even momentary silence, has spoken first in the meeting. Even if the participant was just trying to be helpful to get the conversation going, they have in fact begun by dominating the conversation and the space, in other words "taking up space". Making matters worse, the white person then speaks for 5 minutes uninterrupted and then misinterprets the alienation that the participants of colour feel as perhaps shyness or lack of energy or incompetence/having nothing to contribute. With these racist thoughts in mind, the white participant perhaps concludes they should take the lead of the meeting. This domination of the conversation has become literal white supremacy. While any of the participants of color, who have immediately recognized the pattern, could have stepped in at any time, doing so risks the likely situation of the white participant feeling distraught, sad, undermined, angry, or caught in an interpersonal power struggle – all of which could derail the meeting further.

Holding Space:

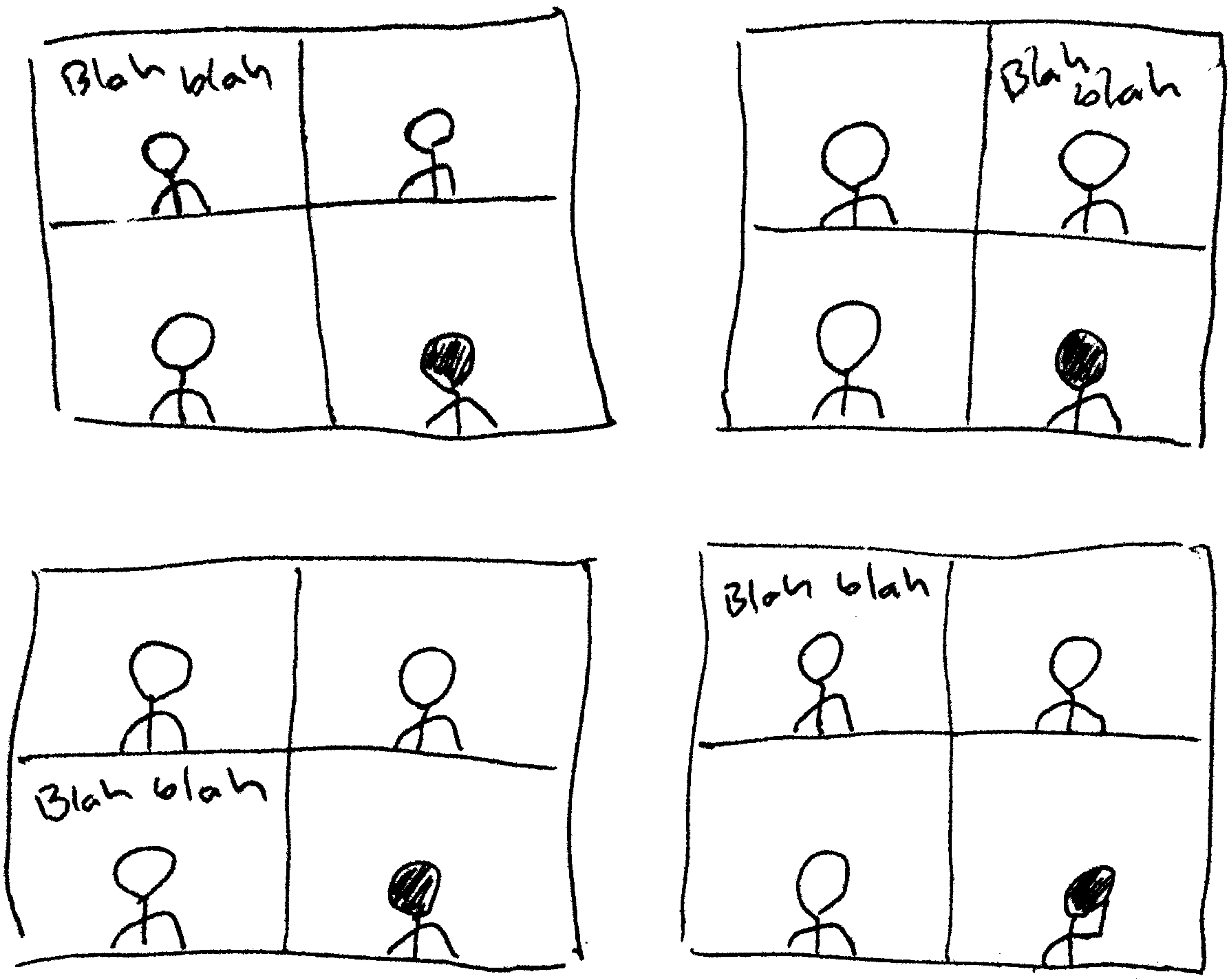


Analysis: Holding Space

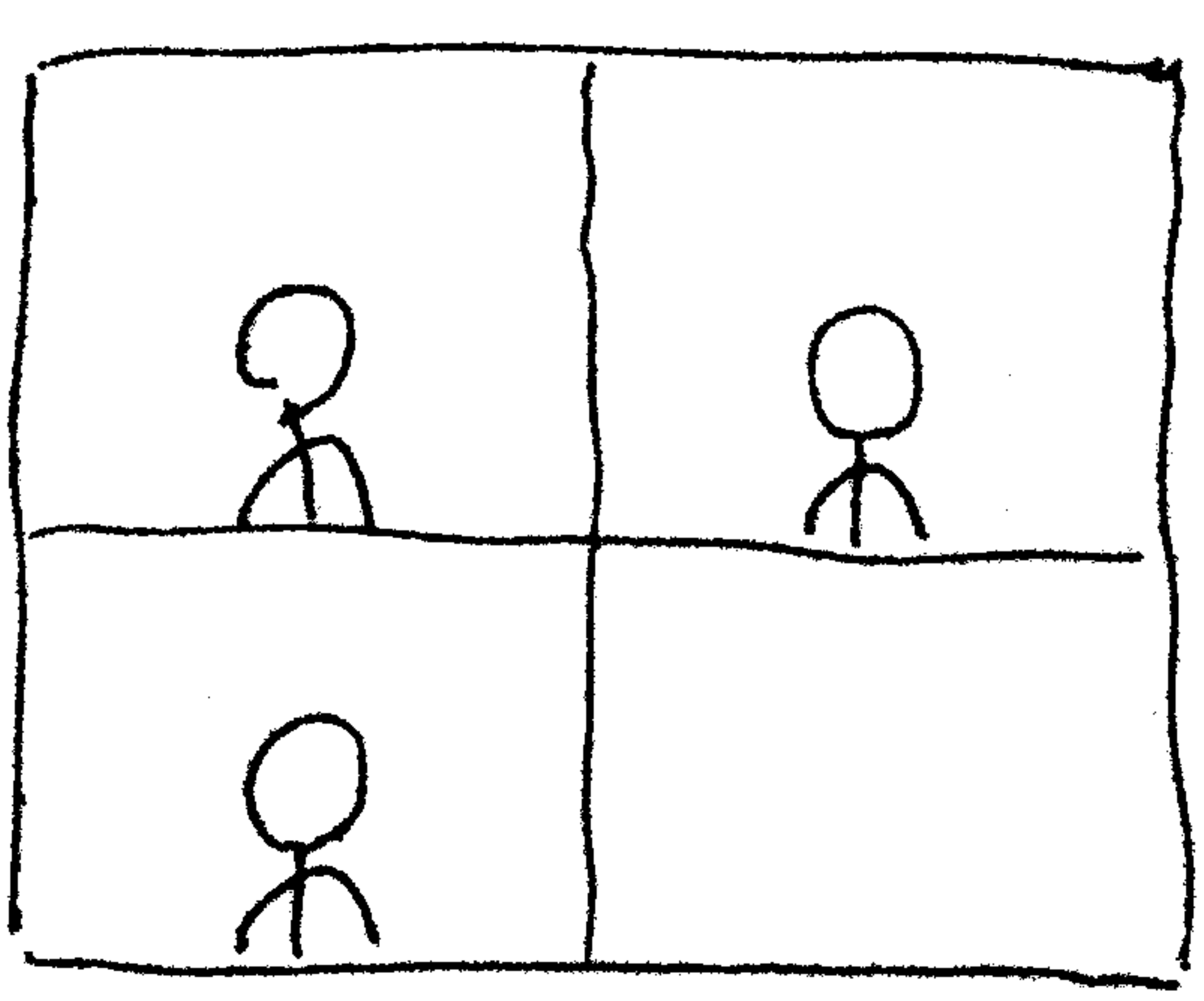
Compared to the situation in "Taking Space", "Holding Space" presents a positive alternative reality in which the white participant, and in fact all the participants, are mindful about taking up space. They practice this mindfulness by being comfortable with silence and waiting until others have shared before speaking. The comfortably shared silence and a participant of color being the first to share have created a sense of intimacy in the group and a sense of dimished racial hierarchy.

Inclusivity:

Week 1



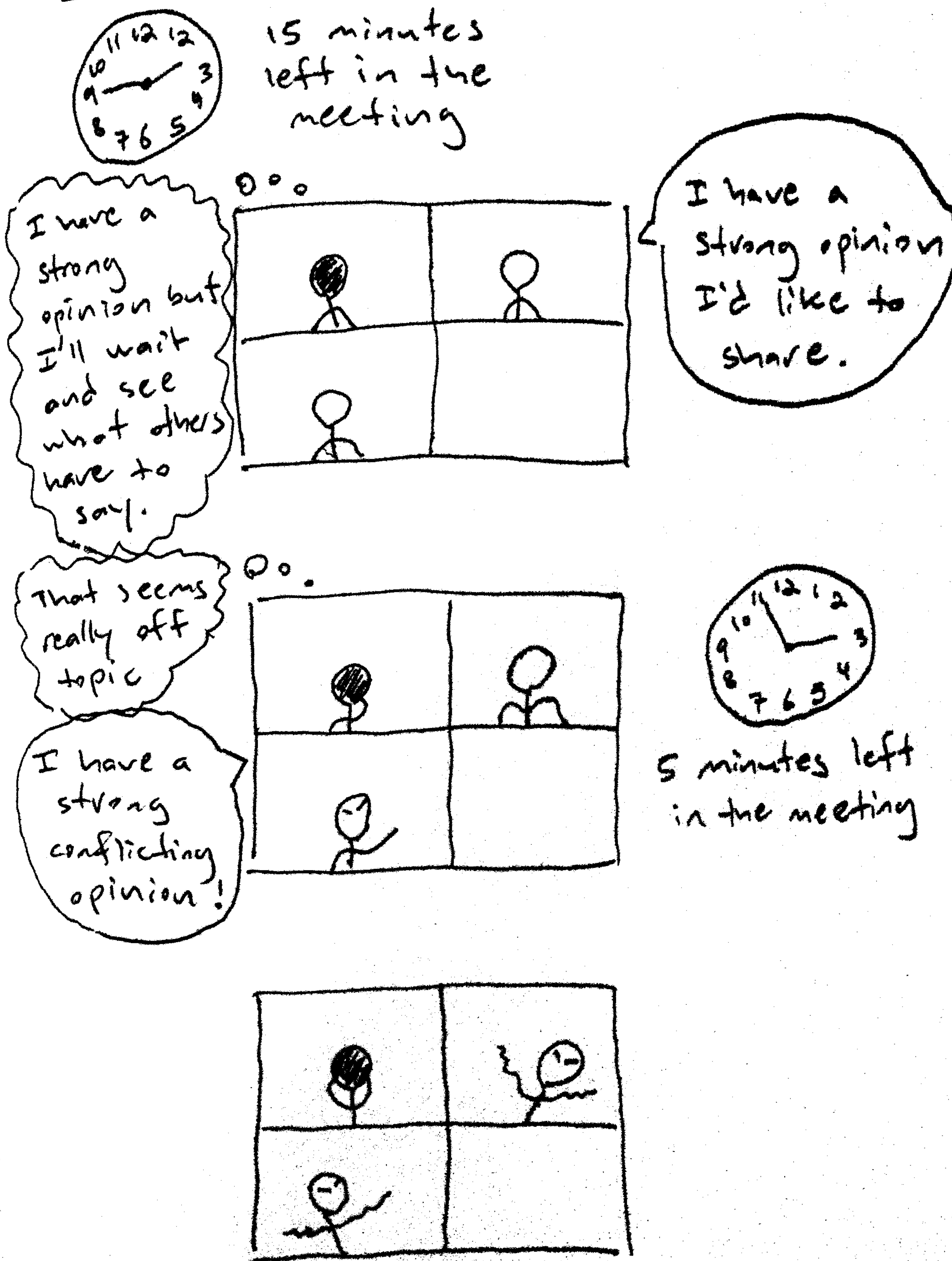
Week 2



Analysis: Inclusivity

In the first week of a meeting of four participants, the three white participants are the only to speak. It's likely that a noticeable proportion of what they say is also culturally specific or group specific references and in-jokes shared amongst those three participants. No effort is made to engage the participant of color even though this person has not spoken at all. The following week the participant of color has disappeared without comment. The white participants do not notice or reflect on this departure. At some point in the future, they might even lament how hard it is to find participants of color for their group. They have in fact completely forgotten there ever was anyone besides them at the meetings.

Any Other Business?



Analysis: Any Other Business?

In a meeting of three participants, there are 15 minutes left until the scheduled end time. The participant of color and the first white participant both have strong opinions they would like to share. The participant of color, perhaps mindful about the amount of time left in the meeting and mindful that others may have important logistical questions, refrains from sharing. The white participant however feels compelled to share. The mere state of having a strong feeling causes the white participant enough discomfort to not hold back. If the white participant is not able to share what they feel is an urgent thought, they will feel cut short, short-changed, unheard. The white participant does not consider that their opinion may be

A.O.B. Analysis cont.

off-topic or highly particular to them. The participant has forced the conversation instead of following its flow.

Making matters worse, the second white participant is stoked by what the first participant said and has entered into an argument in the last stretch of the meeting.

In the future the white participants will feel increasingly free to share their strong opinions and argue with each other because it is perceived as permissible and they are so inclined. While the white participants might cherish these meetings where they can exercise their right to free speech, others will attend

A. O. B. Analysis cont.

the meeting with dread, if at all. participants of color in particular will easilly recognize these free-flowing off-topic impassioned diversions as white entitlement to their time.

It is everyone's responsibility to help a meeting go smoothly. It is important to try not to take offense if a facilitator or a comrade steps in to stop you when you are talking, or draws your attention to something negative or difficult to hear about you. It is your responsibility to listen and reflect. It is equally your responsibility to pay attention to the dynamics in any meeting and to step in yourself when nobody else is, whether to stop someone from talking for too long, to comment on an offensive remark, or to bring someone who hasn't spoken yet into the fold. All will be grateful for your attentiveness.

W.A.I.T.: Ask yourself

Why Am I Talking? ? ?

? Just to be controversial? Provocative?
? To look good to someone? Because ?
something made you mad?

1. When I have something to say, I say it.

2. When I have something to say, I consider when was the last time I spoke and who hasn't spoken yet.

3. When I have something to say, I consider whether my race or gender might be making me feel relatively more or less free to speak.

Next time instead of speaking, take down a note. Check if it still needs to be said in 15 minutes.

Honky-tested, PoC approved